

June 17th, 2020

To: City of Brockville

Protocol for returning to diving on a boat in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Quebec Federation of Underwater Activities (FQAS) presents a protocol for the practice of diving on a boat in order to promote a safe return to outdoor activities - or *open water*. This protocol is based on the principles of social distancing and minimization of contagion put forward by the Quebec Public Health Directorate.

Since the Ontario Health Ministry was consulted for that document we, at SOS – Thousand Island, are proposing that same protocol for a safe return to boat diving.

Resuming of self-driving activity and/or training on a boat

These measures aim to minimize the contact and risk of transmission of COVID-19 by droplets during scuba diving training and/or group activity.

For recreational sports diving from a boat, here is what SOS – Thousand Islands is proposing as a protocol to respect the rules and standards of Ontario's public health, and thus allow a safe recovery.

INSTRUCTIONS AND STEPS TO FOLLOW BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

The trainer or organizer

It must provides participants with this diving protocol and informs them of the following:

- Ask the participant to provide a large bag that can hold all the diving equipment loaned or rented to them for the full duration of the activity.
- At the end, provide a large plastic bag (e.g. garbage bag or other reusable waterproof bag) in which all the diving equipment used is baged as tightly as possible.

The participant

Before participating, you need to complete the symptom screening checklist by using the **Provincial COVID-19 Assessment Tool** available at: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>

The self-assessment is only meant as an aid and cannot diagnose you. If you have medical questions, consult a health care provider or your [local public health unit](#).

The arrival on the site before boarding the boat:

On land or in the classroom, all persons must respect the physical distance in effect on the day of the activity.

Participant need to confirm that they have completed the online screening checklist before participating by using the provincial COVID-19 Assessment Tool at: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>

The self-assessment is only meant as an aid and cannot diagnose you. If you have medical questions, consult a health care provider or your [local public health unit](#).

The classroom or training/briefing place prior to the activity must be arranged according to the rules of physical distance in force. Wearing a personal protective mask (surgical mask style, cloth or homemade) is recommended. *N95 masks are reserved for health workers.

Briefing on the conduct and the procedure to be followed on the boat is done by the responsible person.

Preparation before launching:

As the activity is usually carried out in teams, commonly made up of pairs, additional precautions must be taken for clothing before launching. The physical distance of 2 meters is more difficult to apply on a boat, here are the guidelines we offer to the instructor, dive master or captain in charge of the group:

1. The assembly of tanks/BCD/regs as well as clothing must be made before boarding in accordance with the principle of physical distance, with the exception of the hood and mask.
2. Start with hand sanitizer with a disinfectant gel or other approved product, suitable for skin type and biodegradable. It is generally not possible at dive sites to have sinks and soap to wash your hands. Divers must therefore bring their own supply of disinfectant.
3. Each divers of a team prepares their equipment at a distance of at least 2 meters. When the team is done, each divers of that team moves by staying more than 2 meters from each other to go check the equipment of his/her dive partner, and to make sure that it's functional and ready to dive. Repeat the hand sanitization.
4. Before boarding, once the participants are ready, under the order of the person in charge, they must wear a personal protective mask (surgical mask style, cloth or homemade).
*N95 masks are reserved for health workers.
5. Once the group is all aboard, the equipment is placed according to the instructions of the person in charge. Divers of same team must sit in front of each other and wear their masks (surgical mask style, cloth or homemade) and personal protective gloves. No equipment is put on until the person in charge gives permission.
6. For each team of divers, and one team at a time, the person in charge appoints a team to start dressing. The designated diver rises and turns to face off (outside the boat). He removes his personal protective mask, places it in an airtight plastic bag (Ziploc^{MC} style) and puts it in his bag. After that, he puts on his hood and diving mask. Once the diver is dressed, his partner helps him put the tanks/BCD on his back while always standing behind him.
7. Once the diver is fully geared up and is ready to go in the water, he puts his regulator in his mouth before turning to help his/her partner. (A *buddy check* must be made by sign language one diver after the other.)
8. The fins are put last, once all the divers are ready, mask on their face and regulator in their mouth. Each team can be put in the water as soon as they're ready if conditions allow, to avoid heat stroke. The launch is only done with the permission of the person in charge.
9. Once the first team is in the water, the second team repeats the same procedure.

The exit from the water

10. When returning to the surface, for taking the gear off, each diver can help his/her partner to remove his/her equipment, while keeping his/her regulator in their mouth. Each partner can do the same when needed.



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11. Wearing the personal protective mask is mandatory as soon as the diving mask and regulator are removed.
12. When a team is back on the boat, they must do the same techniques as for clothing (step 3).

General rules

- Try to avoid taking regulator out of your mouth to talk to your partner when too close at the surface to avoid throwing droplets in his/her direction.
- Use an anti-fog product (homemade or commercial) in your diving mask or any method other than spitting in your mask.
- Avoid rinsing your mask with any residue in the water at the end of the dive (no sinus cleaning).
- The various CPR and first aid agencies recommend to do only compressions in case of cardiac arrest, and require the wearing of an N95 mask and a visor, if resuscitation manoeuvres are undertaken.
- If you and your partner are living under the same roof, the above rules do not apply. However, wearing a mask is mandatory as soon as you are with a group.
- For now, driving to the site has to be each in your vehicle, unless you live under the same roof.

It's up to us, divers, to make it happen in a safe manner. If WE ALL respect those rules and procedures until further notice, we can resume our passion for diving and stop the spread of the virus at the same time.

Be patient and be responsible.

Safe diving.

Thomas Scott

THOMAS SCOTT, PRESIDENT
SOS-THOUSAND ISLANDS

PRESERVE ONTARIO'S MARINE HERITAGE